

David King House
20 Catherine Street
Newport
Newport County
Rhode Island

HABS No. RI-317

HABS
RI,
3-NEWP,
34-

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

DAVID KING HOUSE

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RI,
3-NEWP,
34-

Location: 20 Catherine Street.

Present Owner: Miss Myra A. Haire.

Present Occupants: Owner and other tenants.

Present Use: Multiple family dwelling.

Statement of Significance: This is an unusually well-preserved example of the 1-1/2 story, mansard-roofed houses typical of the decades following the Civil War, particularly in this section of Newport.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Original and subsequent owners:

The building is located in Plat 25, Lot 40. The following is an incomplete chain of title from Newport City Clerk's Records for the city of Newport. Reference is to number and volume of the Land Evidence Books, (LEB.--, p.--).

1871 Deed of November 30, 1871, recorded in LEB. 42, p. 397.
From: Daniel Swinburne
To: David King

"... bounded Northerly on a way 94 5/10 feet, Easterly on Brinley Street, about one hundred and fifty feet, Southerly on Catherine Street, 94 5/10 feet, and Westerly on other land of this grantor about one hundred and forty feet..."

1917 Deed of November 5, 1917, recorded in LEB. 105, p. 218.
From: David King, by administratrix
To: Robert Haire

1917 Deed of March 28, 1917, recorded in LEB. 105, p. 216.
From: Thomas A. Dick and Helen M.K. Dick, wife
To: Robert Haire

"... with all their right, title, and interest in
the King House..."

1941 Deed of November 1, 1941, recorded in LEB. 149, p. 259.

From: Cora L. Haire, widow
To: Myra A. Haire, daughter

2. Date of erection: 1871-1872
3. Architect: Dudley Newton
4. Builder or contractor: Unknown
5. Original plans: None known
6. Alterations and additions: None
7. Important old views: None known

B. Historical Events Connected with the Structure:

David King built this house for his daughter and son-in-law, Dr. and Mrs. William H. Birckhead. Although King never lived in this house, the original family called it the "King House", as seen in the deeds of 1917. Dr. Birckhead is listed in Newport Directories at this address beginning in 1873-1874.

C. Sources of Information:

1. Primary and unpublished sources:
Records of Deeds in the Newport City Hall.
Newport Directories, 1873-1874, Newport Historical Society.
"Hazard, Ford and Co., Real Estate Circular, Newport, R.I.,
Season of 1872", Newport Historical Society, Cottage list
box no. 1.
2. Likely sources not yet investigated:
David King family papers.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: This house with its mansard roof is a fine example of the work of Dudley Newton. His unusual treatment of the window sill in relation to the roof line of a mansard roof resulted in the identification of the

"Newton roof" in Newport.

2. Condition of fabric: The house is in excellent condition.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: About 38 feet by 30 feet; rectangular main block facing south with slightly projecting bay at southeast corner, service wing to the rear; 3 bays; 1-1/2 stories.
2. Foundations: The foundation walls employ fieldstone on the exterior, brick on the interior.
3. Wall construction: The frame structure is finished with clapboards and corner boards.
4. Structural system: The frame structural system has brick filled partitions carried on wood beams.
5. Chimneys: There are two brick chimneys in the main block.
6. Openings:
 - a. Doorways: The two leafed door, each with two large panels which have sloped surfaces giving a diamond pattern, is set within a segmental arched doorway with molded architraves.
 - b. Windows: Double-hung windows have large single or double-light sashes. The windows have pediments and heavy sills carried on scrolls. The windows leading to the porch are taller with double-sized lower sashes continuing to the floor. The lower sash can be fully raised, allowing access to and from the porch. Some windows have louvered wood shutters.
7. Roof: The mansard roof with grey and red slate covering, has a southeast bay or pavilion carried into the roof as a tower. The roof, with dormers decorated with heavy bracketed pediments, is finished with a heavy wood cornice.
8. Porches, stoops, and bulkheads: The one-story porch, originally L-shaped across the south front and west side, is now divided in two sections with the corner piece removed and the west side enclosed. The porch posts with diagonal braces and railings with crossed balusters, are all of heavy wood members with champhered edges. The porch roof with its bracketed eaves is low pitched.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plan: The central hall, four room plan has the main parlor at the southwest, small parlor at the southeast, dining room at the northeast, and library at the northwest. These areas are now used as separate apartments but with no alterations. The pantry and kitchen are in the service wing to the rear. The plan of the second floor is similar to the first with the four bedrooms in the main block and servants' rooms above the rear wing.
2. Stairways: The U-shaped open well stairway has turned balusters, a heavy molded rail, and a square panelled newel.
3. Flooring: The 2-1/4 inch wide wood flooring is of alternating light and dark strips.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: All walls are plaster. The 12 foot ceilings on the first floor have heavy plaster covered cornices. The 10 foot ceiling of the second floor central hall also has heavy plaster covered cornices.
5. Doorways and doors: The panelled wood doors are set in heavy molded mitered door frames. Double glazed doors lead from the entrance vestibule to the central hall. Double wood doors open from the central hall to the main rooms.
6. Special decorative features: The fireplaces in the principal rooms have one story mantels with strong robust forms. Some are fitted with iron grates, iron or plaster facings, and mahogany mantels. The mantel in the main parlor is of white marble. The bedrooms have marbelized slate mantels.
7. Hardware: The door knobs are silver or patterned brass.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: The house faces south on a small level lot at the northwest corner of two streets in a predominately residential neighborhood of generally comparable houses.
2. Historic landscape design: None
3. Outbuildings: The small, 1-1/2 story frame stable in the rear, with one finished room on the upper floor, has been remodelled as a garage.

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

Newport HABS Project -- 1969. Sponsored in cooperation with the Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission, Antoinette F. Downing, Chairman. Under the direction of James C. Massey, Chief of HABS, and Osmund Overby, (University of Missouri), Project Supervisor, Jack E. Boucher, photographer.